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ABSTRACT

In response to findings from a study of community college students' motivations for studying a foreign language that indicated that many students cited "personal fulfillment," a second study was undertaken to determine factors that affected students' sense of fulfillment. Specifically, the study sought to determine the relationship between fulfillment and students' gender and ethnicity, perceptions of the quality of foreign language instruction at the college, and other motivations for studying foreign languages. The study population consisted of a random sample of 50 students in 6 German and Spanish language classes at California's Chaffey Community College. Study findings, based on regression analyses run using "personal fulfillment" as the dependent variable, included the following: (1) fully 91.8% of students indicated that they were taking the foreign language class for personal fulfillment, compared to 54.1% taking it for travel, 31.1% for prestige, and another 31.1% for their major; (2) neither student gender nor ethnicity were found to be related to the personal fulfillment which any individual student had with the foreign language; (3) with respect to the quality of instruction, the teaching capability of the foreign language instructor was found to be strongly related students' fulfillment; and (4) job advancement as a motivation was found to be negatively related to personal fulfillment, while prestige as a motive was positively related. The survey instrument is appended. (HAA)

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ED 405 036

# Personal Fulfillment and Foreign Language Study:

# Making the Match

Iris Dolores Thot

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# Personal Fulfillment and Foreign Language Study: Making the Match

## Introduction

We are living in a world which is rapidly shrinking; e-mail and cellular phones have made almost every corner of the world accessible to outside influence. This new immediacy is both a blessing and a thorn in the side to the American nation. The blessings are new opportunities for business and political transactions; the thorn is that Americans as a rule are monolingual and monocultural. While other countries groom their children to be the ambassadors to the world of tomorrow by compulsory foreign language instruction from grade 3 on, we don't introduce a foreign language until the ninth or tenth grade, and even then it is not a requirement!

The goal for the nation's foreign language instructors should be not only to insist on foreign language training for all children beginning in elementary school, but also to make the instruction relevant, meaningful, and fulfilling. Only in this manner can our work as foreign language professionals have any lasting results.

In my last study I surveyed community college students about their reasons for enrolling in a foreign language class. Many of their answers surprised me, but especially that of

"personal fulfillment." In the present study I tried to take this a bit further, so I ran multiple regressions using personal fulfillment as a dependent variable and several independent variables based on the questionnaire such as demographic, college-related and other motivational.

The goal of this research project is to pinpoint the variables which have the most impact on personal fulfillment. Then it is up to foreign language instructors to tailor their lessons around what these variables are. It is my belief that if we are to increase the potential for world peace it is pertinent that students feel good about themselves and about what they can do with the knowledge they have gained.

**Significance of the Research**

The significance of the problem of American foreign language ignorance is present on three levels. The first level is that of theory. It has been proven that children learn foreign languages much easier and with much less stress than do adults. "There is no age level at which the focus on communication is more appropriate than that of the elementary school pupil" (Curtain & Pesola, 1988, p. xiv).

It is also a fact that American elementary school language programs (when they do exist) occur "in a meaningful communicative context: social and cultural situations; subject-content instruction; games, songs and rhymes; experiences with arts, crafts, and sports" (Curtain & Pesola, 1988, p. xiv). If we as professional foreign language instructors are trying to increase personal fulfillment in those students who do take

our subject, then should we not attempt to decrease the frustration level of adult language learning and increase the joy and ease of childhood language learning?

This would be the most appropriate step to take for our nation, but there is a major obstacle: on a second level, there is the significance of policy. The policy of our government and our school boards has been to exclude foreign languages from the K-12 curriculum. Except for a smattering of immersion and FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary School) programs across the country, our public school system has largely banished foreign languages to the role of "elective," something which, as a result, is simply not taken seriously. Many a language teacher (myself included!) has had to struggle against the prevailing attitude of high-schoolers that he or she doesn't have time for our subject because they have work for their "important" classes to do!

A foreign language teacher's job is further frustrated by the fact that foreign languages enter the average K-12 continuum at the 9th grade level - at the earliest! If theory has proven that children learn foreign languages so much easier, then why does our national policy sabotage this fact, especially when the students themselves wish earlier instruction?

As a German and Spanish instructor at both the high school and college levels, I have had many students complain to me how difficult it is to learn a language when you are not a child. Those students are absolutely right! Who of us can remember learning English? Not many, and that is because as a child we

learned our native language through games and songs and meaningful communication, not through grammar drills and translation exercises, which is how many foreign language classes at the high school and college levels are conducted. How, do I ask, are we expected to engender our students with a personal fulfillment and commitment to foreign languages that will last a lifetime if they hate the process of learning them?

On a practical level, the significance of the American language problem is immense. What good will all the technology of the computer revolution do us if we can not communicate with individuals in other countries? Should we continue to insist that everyone learns English and risk missing out on important business deals and political reconciliations, or should we raise our children with a multicultural consciousness and a facility in at least one foreign language?

The choice, ultimately, is ours. I would hope that every American citizen, regardless of race and religion, may see the importance of learning another language - the same as learning math, English, and science are of essence to our society. Just as children will experience a feeling of personal fulfillment when they have learned their times tables or their English syntax, they will feel especially wonderful if they can speak to another child in its native language. This, as I see it, is even better than personal fulfillment - it is world peace in the making.

## Literature Review

No research study in the field of foreign language would

be complete without delving into the literature. There exist optimistic works on early language learning such as the book by Curtain and Pesola titled Languages and Children- Making the Match, which details the rationale for teaching foreign languages to children: "When language learning begins earlier, it can go on longer and provide more practice and experience, leading ultimately to greater fluency and effectiveness" (Curtain & Pesola, 1988, p. 3).

The book goes on to describe the excellent program in the Milwaukee Public School District, which possesses immersion programs in a multitude of different languages. Once a student graduates from the district, "he or she is likely to have skills to participate fully in local, state, national, and global citizenship activities" (Curtain & Pesola, 1988, p. 10).

There is no better way to prepare a child to enter our ever-shrinking globe than through early-language programs such as Milwaukee's. More importantly, these children and young people are also likely to receive personal fulfillment from their experiences, a phenomena which will urge them to reach out to other cultures as true ambassadors of peace.

Another work which further expounds upon the idea of children learning foreign languages is a book by Wilga M. Rivers entitled, Interactive Language Teaching. The author gives several suggestions for activities tailored specifically for the elementary school child. So-called "humanistic exercises" are encouraging beginnings for future diplomats and ambassadors of goodwill.

Through exercises such as these, students are encouraged to "explore their feelings, memories, values, and fantasies" (Rivers, 1987, p. 35). Off course, everything is done in the target language; "listening skills become very important, for if students cannot understand a task they cannot perform it" (Rivers, 1987, p. 35). Through foreign languages children have the potential not only of acquiring personal fulfillment through understanding another culture and tongue, but they also learn the important skills of listening and tolerance - two very fundamental building blocks for peace.

While the first two books concentrate mainly on children in the younger grades, the book by Omaggio, Teaching Language in Context, discusses foreign languages on the secondary and post-secondary levels. The work gives strategies on teaching culture, planning instruction for the proficiency-oriented classroom, developing oral proficiency, and becoming proficient in writing and comprehension.

While the book is generally optimistic, it doesn't fail to cast a dark shadow of what can happen when nations, like Hitler's Germany, consider language learning to be inconsequential: "He (Hitler) apparently did not consider or value the permanent benefits that would be derived from learning about another culture through language study" (Omaggio, 1986, pgs. 358-359).

While one should certainly never compare the government of the United states with that of Nazi Germany, the unanimous reluctance of law-makers in our midst to give foreign languages

the go ahead in our schools is somewhat troubling. If we wish to prevent some of the extreme ethnocentric attitudes which are flourishing amongst several White Supremist groups in our country, we must plant the seeds of cultural understanding which comes with language learning early.

An article by Lorand B. Szalay underscores the importance of being not only linguistically fluent, but also culturally fluent. "Without sufficient direct personal experience with the rich diversity of cultural perspectives, it is frequently argued that people's views and meanings are so diverse domestically that they could not be more diverse internationally" (Szalay, 1982, p. 97). Indeed, although we may look at our nation as a "melting pot," there is much we can learn about one another, the center to which is language and culture. The earlier we expose our children to foreign language instruction, the better we will be able to counter bigotry and hate in our own backyard.

An article by Judith T. Irvine of Brandeis University examines the question "of whether there are significant cross-cultural differences in the ways emotional states are displayed, and if so, what these differences might be" (Irvine, 1982, p. 31). The bottom line is that there is no set guarantee for the degree of universality of expressing emotion, especially in gesture and facial display. What is acceptable in this country, like the "O.K." gesture with one's index finger and thumb, is offensive within the Brazilian culture.

Thus, culture, like language, is a very complex issue and this is why it should be studied in earnest at our schools

beginning in kindergarten. What could ever replace the smile on the face of a child who has made "cultural contact" with a peer from another country? The personal fulfillment which accompanies this would truly last a life time!

Foreign language professionals have realized more and more that culture belongs in the language classroom. Leopold K. Engels of the University of Leuven attests that "Language is not an abstract entity living on its own. It is organically bound with the human being it is living in. Language is a complex entity: it is also at home in physiology, in psychology, in sociology, in pedagogy, and in acoustics" (Engels, 1973, p. 5). The important fact that foreign language should not be taught and learned in a vacuum is underscored by the author.

That foreign language instruction in the elementary school setting can use games, songs, crafts and role-playing to an extent that cannot be employed at older ages (because older students become more and more inhibited), is just another reason why language instruction beginning at younger ages is not only an option, but a necessity in the United States.

In his article Some Social Implications of Language Study, Wolfgang Kuehlwein details the importance of communicative considerations in the foreign language classroom. The author notes that within the last few years "the primary emphasis on language instruction has shifted toward attaining communicative skills of speech production and listening-comprehension in the target language" (Kuehlwein, 1973, p. 23). It is easy to see

how games, songs, crafts and role-playing fit effortlessly into this schema.

Communicative skills notwithstanding, Kuehlwein makes an effort to mention the fact that literary-cultural knowledge needs to walk hand-in-hand with the former. After all, a person with full fluency in a language could still be misunderstood if his cultural knowledge is not up to par with that of his linguistic know-how. This article reiterates the fact that our foreign language instruction needs to be <u>well-rounded</u> in order to bring the best possible benefits to the students.

The problem of planning a national language policy is brought up in an article by Shirley Brice Heath. "Any language policy must have at its center the notion that culture and language derive in large part from communities which bear them and cannot be planned to yield designated results which may not fit the needs and goals of communities" (Heath, 1978, p. 64). Heath goes on to mention that any plans for a language policy in our nation would therefore need to move cautiously, since it has "the powerful potential of impinging on the sets of cultural choices open to citizens in their daily living" (Heath, 1978, p. 64).

An example of a culturally sensitive language policy would be immersion programs in certain languages which correspond to the communities where that language is predominately spoken, like Spanish and Mandarin in the Milwaukee Public School District. Heath is correct in her declaration that policy makers need to be culturally sensitive to these issues. Problems arise

when monolingual and monocultural law makers are the ones making decisions about foreign language instruction.

Seen from a Canadian standpoint, an article by Merril Swain talks about immersion programs in French for English-speaking Canadians. The first French immersion class began in St. Lambert, a suburb of Montreal, where a group of English-speaking parents were pushing for a program which would help their children attain fluency in French much better than the traditional "French-as-a-second-language program" (FSL) offered at the secondary schools.

The program came to be known as an early total French immersion program: "early because it begins with the first day of schooling; total immersion because all instruction is initially provided through the medium of the second language" (Swain, 1978, p. 142). English instruction isn't even introduced until the 3rd grade. Although it is hard to believe, children in immersion programs do better on English proficiency tests given in 4th grade than do children in traditional English only programs.

What's better is that by the time they graduate from 12th grade, children who have gone through a program like that in St. Lambert speak the target language fluently and are also knowledgeable in the cultural norms of the language. The personal fulfillment which a program like this eventually gives a child cannot be understated.

Certainly immersion programs like the ones in Canada are in short supply in the United States of America. Although

excellent immersion schools like those in Wisconsin and Georgia are making a name for themselves, they are still relegated to the side-lines, considered a mere curiosity for many Americans who are under the false impression that their children would somehow be "less of an American" if they learned their subjects in a foreign tongue rather than in English.

The Report of the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, chaired by James A. Perkins under President Carter in 1979, stated that the problem of foreign language illiteracy in our country "extends from our elementary schools, where instruction in foreign languages...has virtually disappeared" (Perkins, 1979, p. 457).

Writing in 1981, Renate A. Schulz in Searching for Life after Death: In the Aftermath of the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, attempted to see how much had really changed since the Perkins Report two years earlier. Although she viewed some improvements, such as the establishment of the National Council on Foreign Language and International Studies, the author warned that nothing will truly change until "we make intensive or immersion programs available as regular curricular options" (Schulz, 1981, p. 2).

A report which appeared in 1982 not only ascertained that Schulz' advice regarding immersion schools had not been taken seriously, but also painted a dark picture of America's ignorance in foreign language and cultural issues. Some of the observations, many of which still are startlingly accurate today, are shocking:

Most area specialist officers in the Executive Branch, including the intelligent services, do not and usually cannot, read the materials of greatest concern to them in the original and cannot converse with their foreign counterparts beyond pleasantries in the other language (Lurie, 1982, p. 414).

The author also observed that "it is estimated that of last year's high school graduates, fewer than 2 percent were fluent in a second language" (Lurie, 1982, p. 414). How are foreign language students supposed to feel personal fulfillment in their knowledge of a language when they are not even fluent? Surly early language learning would improve not only an individual's fluency level, but also the student's self esteem.Learning a language as a child would also open a student up to "enculturation," without which language learning is truly incomplete.

Myriam Met's article Teaching Language and Culture: A View from the Schools, discusses this dilemma. "Because foreign language students have little practice in interpreting levels of politeness at the comprehension level, they are unlikely to be able to knowingly express such distinctions themselves" (Met, 1992, p. 266). As many of us realize, knowing how to be polite and respectful in some areas of the world can make all the difference in sealing a business deal or a peace accord. Thus, the author feels that culture, no matter how it is taught, is indispensable to the students.

Sandra Savignon of the University of Illinois, renders the importance of not viewing foreign language as just

encompassing the elements of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Like Met, who believed that culture needs to accompany grammar, Savignon states that language learning includes a myriad of elements, as reflected in the title of her article, Language, Communication, Social Meaning, and Social Change: The Challenge for Teachers. The article implies that foreign language should not be taught as if its learners lived in a vacuum, but, rather, within the real, living context of a world which is constantly in flux.

In a world such as this, grammatical accuracy is not the most important issue, rather, the ability to communicate in the manner appropriate to the target culture is more important. Savignon said it best in her conclusion. "Language is communication, communication rich with social meaning" (Savignon, 1992, p. 104).

Wilga M. Rivers wrote an article about internationalizing foreign language departments at the university level which goes along with the theme of teaching foreign languages within a changing, dynamic world. In Internationalization for the University: Where are the Foreign Languages?, Rivers states that "expanding the curriculum or permeating it to encompass a global perspective is a campus-wide responsibility" (Rivers, 1992, p. 184).

The author suggests that foreign language faculty assist professors of other subjects by "providing tutorial sections where language material related to the topic or culturally determined aspects of professional behavior are elucidated and

discussed" (Rivers, 1992, p. 184). After all, since foreign language is such an indispensable component of any international curriculum, foreign language faculty must be centrally involved in the process.

An easy way that language faculty can internationalize the curriculum at their site, regardless of the level of instruction, is through the medium of videos. The article by Thomas J. Garza, What You See is What You Get...Or is it?: Bringing Cultural Literacy into the Foreign Language Classroom Through Video, illustrates this point. According to Garza "the consensus of language specialists seems to be focusing on the necessity to teach (and learn!) foreign language skills and relevant cultural content together as one holistic domain" (Garza, 1990, p. 285).

Videos "prepared by native speakers of a language for other native speakers" (Garza, 1990, p. 288), can be used not only in the foreign language classroom, but also in social studies classes, science classes and art and music classes, especially if sub-titles are included. This medium will deliver an international dimension to the school or institution as a whole.

Mike McKinnon gives some insight into how interdisciplinary cooperation can occur between Social Studies and Second Language Instructors at the elementary and secondary school level. His booklet, Common Ground, gives some good ideas for more of an international program that any school can achieve. According to McKinnon, Foreign Language and Social studies teachers "have a common interest in culture...in identifying similarities and

differences of lifestyles that help students increase their sensitivity to and understanding of the realities of an emerging European dimension in our contemporary world" (McKinnon, 1992, p. 3).

Interdisciplinary suggestions such as those of McKinnon are not only open doors through which foreign languages can enter the core curriculum, but also a medium through which young people can catch the foreign language "bug." Exercises such as "Air Germany," in which elementary school students take a trip to Germany through simulated activities (with the help of high school German language students acting as flight attendants and tour guides), can make a lasting impression on young minds that foreign languages are both fun and useful. Early positive experiences can do loads for personal fulfillment and self esteem.

Finally, yet another article by Sandra Savignon describes some vibrant, communicative types of language instruction which make learning a language more authentic and enjoyable. The article Communicative Language Teaching: Definitions and Directions, expresses the fact that reliance on older methods such as the grammatical and audio-lingual approaches keep both instructors and students in a time-warp. Rather, Savignon urges teachers to investigate the communicative approach, and to "participate in the interpretation of findings for materials and classroom practice" (Savignon, 1990, p. 216).

Only in this way, by utilizing a method which reproduces real life, can we prepare students for the linguistic and

cultural realities which living in our ever-shrinking world entails. Peace and understanding can then ensue, and so can personal fulfillment which will last a lifetime.

Although I have reported some major findings in the literature, there is a remaining question which has not been answered thus far, and that is: "Which variables have the most impact on personal fulfillment of students who learn a foreign language?" This question will be further addressed in the following section.

**Hypothesis**

One cannot come away from the literature on foreign language instruction, especially in the elementary grades, and not see a connection with personal fulfillment. And why not? Foreign languages offer the individual an opportunity to communicate with peoples in other countries, they give people an insight into other cultures and belief systems, as well as needed survival skills for a foreign country. Individuals who have foreign language skills usually have better English skills than the average American, and their knowledge about culture and geography also well surpasses the mainstream. It is not difficult to see how personal fulfillment would be correlated with foreign language study.

Since I am convinced that foreign language study is of benefit to every American child, I ask myself why it is not contained in the core curriculum of most public schools. In an age when self esteem is high on the list of what is important for youth, one would think that a medium such as language study



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which can provide life-long personal experience through interaction with people of other cultures, would be a top priority for our boards of education. Why language study is not considered important enough to be included in the core curriculum could be the topic of another research paper!

In this particular study I am dealing with the dependent variable of **Personal Fulfillment** as an outcome of foreign language study. Although my data file concerns community college students, I am confident that my findings will be applicable to all educational levels of language study. My independent variables are arranged in three categories: a) **Background Variables** - the demographic variables of gender and ethnicity (both are dichotomous variables, and so will work for multiple regression).

b) **College Capability Variables** - variables such as the quality of the college foreign language program, the teaching capability of the instructor, the quality of the foreign language text, the effectiveness of the audio program in the language lab, the enjoyment of the particular foreign language, taking a foreign language class for one's major, and the recommendation of the particular foreign language to someone else.

c) **Other Motivational Variables** - variables which are neither background variables nor college capability variables; these are job advancement as a result of language study, becoming more attractive on the job market, travel facilitated by language study, the desire to make a difference in the world, the relative difficulty of a foreign language, more money on the job as a

result of learning a foreign language, increased prestige as a result of language study, the opportunity to participate in study/work abroad projects as a result of language study, the feeling that foreign language study may help contribute to world peace, and other reasons for taking a foreign language.

Through regression analyses I hope to have the answer to how well the independent variables predict the dependent variable, and which independent variables have the most impact upon the dependent variable. The results will provide valuable assistance to myself as well as to other language instructors as to how we can structure the foreign language curriculum to enhance students' personal fulfillment. This sentiment is important because it radiates out from the classroom to embrace an individual's relationship with people of different races and cultures - this is the essence of foreign language learning.

**Research Methods**

I actually began this study last semester when I surveyed community college students at Chaffey Community College in Rancho Cucamonga, California, about why they were enrolled in a foreign language class. The interest on my part evolved because I am an adjunct German instructor at the college, and have been impressed with the enthusiasm and genuine desire to learn which I find amongst my evening class students.

Sampling Procedures:

I had decided that my sampling plan should have at least 50 subjects, all of which would be current community college students at my institution. I decided upon a random sample of

six foreign language classes (German and Spanish) on the Chaffey campus. The classes ranged from elementary (German I) to advanced (Spanish IV); also included were a conversation class and a literature class. I thought that the varied responses from different levels and different languages would provide me with a random, non-biased sample of the typical community college student presently enrolled in a foreign language class.

Key Variables in the Questionnaire:

The questionnaire is composed of a total of 24 variables. Seventeen of them are used as independent variables in the present study. One of them, Personal Fulfillment as an Outcome of Foreign Language Learning, is used as the dependent variable. This dependent variable is derived from item 12 on the questionnaire:

"What kinds of outcomes do you associate with learning a foreign language?

(Check all which apply)

( ) More money, since it can help me with my job

( ) Prestige, since I will be able to compete on an international level

( ) Personal fulfillment, since I will be able to speak and communicate better with people from other countries

( ) Other (Please Specify) _____

I chose Personal Fulfillment as my dependent variable because it was the most widely chosen outcome by all students, and because I wanted to see what variables subsequently influence and enhance it.

The demographic independent variables of gender, age, and ethnicity, were derived from questionnaire items 17, 18, and 19, respectively. The college capability variables consisting of the teaching capability of the instructor, the quality of the college language program, the quality of the foreign language text, the effectiveness of the audio program in the language lab, the enjoyment of the particular language, and the recommendation of the particular foreign language to someone else, were derived from questionnaire items 6, 5, 7, 8, 2, and 3, respectively.

The final set of independent variables, namely other motivational variables, consisted of job advancement as a result of language study, travel facilitated by language study, the desire to make a difference in the world, the relative difficulty of a foreign language, more money on the job as a result of learning a foreign language, increased prestige as a result of language study, the opportunity to participate in study/work abroad projects as a result of language study, and the feeling that foreign language study may help contribute to world peace.

The first three variables were all derived from questionnaire item 1. The forth variable was taken from number 10. The fifth and sixth variables were derived from item 12. The seventh variable was derived from questionnaire item 13, and the last variable came from item 14.

These three different sets of independent variables were then employed in regression analyses against the dependent variable using **stepwise**. Four regressions were run; the first

regression consisted of the background variables and the dependent variable; the second regression consisted of the college capabilities variables and the dependent variable; the third regression consisted of the other motivational variables and the dependent variable, and the forth regression consisted of all independent variables combined, and the dependent variable. The results are profiled in the next section.

**Results Section**

Since the variables on which my regression analyses are run are from the community college sample I garnered during the Fall semester of 1995, I will first report the descriptive statistics from that data. The variables for which I have frequency distributions, and the data pertaining to them follow in the table below:

Descriptive Statistics

**Table I: Frequency Distributions for Dichotomous Variables (Where "Yes" is coded 1, and "No" is coded 2)**

| Variable | N | % Yes | % No | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reason for Studying a F.L.:** | | | | | |
| **Job Advancement** | 61 | 14.8% | 85.2% | 1.85 | .36 |
| **Job Market** | 61 | 26.6 | 73.8 | 1.74 | .44 |

Table I, Continued...

| Variable | N | % Yes | % No | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To Make a Difference in the World | 61 | 29.5% | 70.5% | 1.71 | .46 |
| Major | 61 | 31.1% | 67.2% | 1.68 | .47 |
| Travel | 61 | 54.1% | 45.9% | 1.46 | .50 |
| F.L. Outcomes: | | | | | |
| More Money | 61 | 18 % | 82 % | 1.82 | .39 |
| Prestige | 61 | 31.1 % | 68.9 % | 1.70 | .47 |
| Personal Fulfillment | 61 | 91.8 % | 8.2 % | 1.08 | .28 |

Table II, Variables in Yes/No/Not Sure Question (Yes=1, No=2, Not Sure=3)

| Variables | N | % Yes | % No | % Not Sure | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Enjoyment of the F.L. | 61 | 95.1 % | 0 | 4.9 % | 1.00 | .000 |
| Recommending the F.L. | 61 | 95.1 % | 0 | 4.9% | 1.00 | .000 |

Table III, Variables in Likert Scale (Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree/No Opinion)

| Variable | N | % SA | % A | % D | % SD | % NO | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| If More People Learned a F.L. There Would be Less War | 61 | 23% | 34% | 24.6% | 4.9% | 13.1% | 2.13 | .88 |
| Every Child Should Study a F.L. | 61 | 52.5% | 31.1% | 6.6% | 0 | 9.8 % | 1.51 | .63 |



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Table I, Continued...

| Variable | N | % Yes | % No | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To Make a Difference in the World | 61 | 29.5% | 70.5% | 1.71 | .46 |
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| If More People Learned a F.L. There Would be Less War | 61 | 23% | 34% | 24.6% | 4.9% | 13.1% | 2.13 | .88 |
| Every Child Should Study a F.L. | 61 | 52.5% | 31.1% | 6.6% | 0 | 9.8 % | 1.51 | .63 |



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Table III, continued...

| Variable | N | % SA | % A | % D | % SD | % NO | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Study/ Work Abroad in Connection with a F.L. | 61 | 44.3 % | 41 % | 1 % | 0 | 13.1 % | 1.51 | .54 |

Table IV, Variable in Likert Scale (Excellent/Very Good/Good/Fair/Poor)

| Variable | N | % E | % VG | % G | % F | % P | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rating the F.L. Teacher | 60 | 65.5 % | 21.3 % | 6.6 % | 1.6 % | 0 | 1.500 | .83 |

Table V, Variable in Yes, very difficult/Yes, difficult, but I enjoy it/Not hard, but I have to study/No, its a breeze/Not Sure Question

| Variable | N | % Y, v. diff. | % Y, but enjoy | % Not h. | % breeze | % NS | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Difficulty of the F.L. | 60 | 4.9 % | 50.8 % | 36.1 % | 6.6 % | 0 | 2.45 | .70 |

Although the data from the frequency distributions speak for themselves, I would like to make a few pertinent points. First, it is easy to see why I chose Personal Fulfillment as a dependent variable, since a total of 91.8% respondents chose this variable as an important thing which they associated with foreign language learning.

The data from the frequency distributions reflect that personal fulfillment is a variable out of which flow many independent variables such as recommending the language to a friend, studying abroad in conjunction with the language, enjoying the foreign language class experience, and taking a

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f.l. for job advancement. In fact, as the reader will see, my multiple regression analyses actually showed that persons likely to take a foreign language for job advancement purposes were less likely to have personal fulfillment (probably because they weren't doing it out of choice).

Multiple Regression Analyses:

I ran four regressions; one was run with the dependent variable and the set of demographic independent variables; the next one was run with the dependent variable and the set of college capability independent variables; the third regression was run with the dependent variable and the set of other motivational independent variables; the final regression was run with the dependent variable and a combination of all three sets of independent variables.

Throughout my project I was aware of the "10 to 1 rule," meaning that with my sample of 61 it would not be wise to have more than six independent variables entering a regression equation at any one time. As it turned out, I never had more than three predictors in the equation at once, and so I was in the clear in that regard. I will now go on to describe each regression analysis and its results in detail.

**The First Regression**

Stepwise with a tolerance level of .30 was used. Mean Substitution was also used. The first regression was run with the dependent variable Personal Fulfillment as an Outcome of Foreign Language Learning, and the following demographic variables: Gender (a yes/no dichotomous variable) and the

following yes/no ethnicity variables: Ethnicity: AfroAmerican, Ethnicity: Anglo, Ethnicity: Asian, Ethnicity: Hispanic, Ethnicity: Native American, and Ethnicity: Other. These were the only demographic predictors I could enter into the equation since all the others (i.e., Age, Current Marital Status, and Current Occupation, were non-dichotomous nominal variables).

The results of this regression were non-forthcoming. No variable was entered/removed during the equation. Thus one can assume that these particular demographic variables were inconsequential upon the personal fulfillment which any individual student had with a foreign language.

**The Second Regression**

Stepwise with a tolerance level of .30 was used. Mean Substitution was also used. The regression equation contained the dependent variable Personal Fulfillment as an Outcome of Foreign Language Learning and the following independent variables: The Teaching Capability of the Foreign Language Instructor, The Quality of the College Foreign Language Program, Taking a Foreign Language for One's Major, The Quality of the Foreign Language Text, The Effectiveness of the Audio Program in the Language Lab, The Student's Enjoyment of the Particular Foreign Language, and The Student's Recommendation of the Particular Foreign Language to Someone Else.

There were results for this regression equation. The Teaching Capability of the Foreign Language Instructor entered. It was the only predictor from this group to enter the equation. The results, as seen in **Table VI**, show that students place great

emphasis on having a good foreign language teacher. The other college capability variables such as the quality of the lab, the textbook, and the overall college foreign language program have no effect upon a student's personal fulfillment with language learning.

**Table VI. Predicting Personal Fulfillment in Foreign Language Learning Through College Related Variables**

| Independent Variable | Beta | T | Sig T |
|---|---|---|---|
| RATETEAC | .55 | 5.02 | .01 |

R = .55 F = 25.15
R Square = .30 sig F = .01

N = 61

**The Third Regression**

Stepwise, with a tolerance level of .30 was used. Mean substitution was also employed. The equation was run with the dependent variable Personal Fulfillment as an Outcome of Foreign Language Learning and the following predictors: Job Advancement as a Result of Language Study, Becoming More Attractive on the Job Market as a Result of Language Study, Deciding to Study a Foreign Language for Other Reasons, Travel Facilitated by Language Study, The Desire to Make a Difference in the World as a Result of Language Study, The Relative Difficulty of a Foreign Language, More Money on the Job as a Result of Learning a Foreign Language, Increased Prestige as a Result of Language Study, The Opportunity to Participate in Study/Work Abroad Projects as a Result of Language Study, and The Feeling That

Foreign Language Study May Help Contribute to World Peace.

There were results with this regression. Two variables entered the equation. The first independent variable to enter was The Relative Difficulty of a Foreign Language.

The fact that this particular variable entered the equation first signifies that it is an important predictor of personal fulfillment with a foreign language. The individual student apparently achieves greater satisfaction when he or she perceives the language to be difficult, than when it is easy.

In the second step of the equation the independent variable Travel Facilitated by Language Study entered. The fact that this particular variable was the second, and last independent variable to enter the equation signifies that travel made easier through language learning - allowing the individual to communicate with persons abroad,- is more viable a predictor for personal fulfillment through foreign language learning than are variables such as Job Advancement as a Result of Language Study, and Increased Prestige as a Result of Language Study.

**Table VII, Predicting Personal Fulfillment as an Outcome of Foreign Language Learning Through Other Motivational Variables**

| Independent Variable | Beta | T | Sig T |
|---|---|---|---|
| FRLPLEAS | .27 | 2.26 | .028 |
| FLDIFFIC | .28 | 2.28 | .027 |

R = .42 F = 6.31
R Square = .18 sig F = .0033

N = 61

**The Fourth Regression**

Stepwise was used, with a tolerance level of .30. Mean Substitution was also used. This last equation was run with the dependent variable, Personal Fulfillment as an Outcome of Foreign Language Learning, and a combination of all the independent variables (Demographic, College Capability, and Other Motivational variables).

There were results. A total of three independent variables entered the equation. The first of these was The Teaching Capability of the Foreign Language Instructor. The fact that this variable was entered in the equation run with college capability variables, as well as in a combination of all other predictors, reveals the importance of good teaching for students' personal fulfillment in a language. If the teaching is poor, personal fulfillment is low, and students eventually drop out.

The next independent variable to enter the equation was that of Job Advancement as a Result of Language Study. This is significant, since there is a negative correlation in the Beta and T. It is safe to assume that as an individual attains more job advancement due to f.l. learning, personal fulfillment goes down. This can be attributed to the fact that some companies may coerce a person into learning a foreign language, thus reducing the personal fulfillment level.

The last variable to enter the equation was Increased Prestige as a Result of Language Study. Since this predictor was the only other independent variable together with Job Advancement as a Result of Language Study and The Teaching

Capability of the Foreign Language Instructor to enter the equation, it is a significant force in predicting personal fulfillment through foreign language study. The added prestige which students feel they could receive through knowledge of one or more foreign languages inevitably leads to a higher sense of personal fulfillment.

**Table VIII, Predicting Personal Fulfillment as an Outcome of Foreign Language Learning Through a Combination of all Independent Variables**

| Independent Variable | Beta | T | Sig T |
|---|---|---|---|
| RFLJOBAD | -.34 | -3.12 | .0028 |
| OCPRESTI | .23 | 2.14 | .0366 |
| RATETEAC | .60 | 5.80 | .01 |

R = .64 F = 13.40
R Square = .41 sig F = .01

N = 61

**Interpretation and Discussion**

From my findings it is clear that some factors are more important in predicting personal fulfillment than are others. It is important that we recognize what these important variables are, and how strong of a predictor of personal fulfillment they seem to be. However, it is important to note that due to the fact that my dependent variable was extremely skewed - over 90% said yes - some of the results may have been affected.

Overall, my study showed that demographic variables such as gender and ethnicity played no role in predicting personal fulfillment. There were some interesting findings in the Betas and the T's, however.


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I was able to discern this from the print-out of the fourth regression, where all independent variables were entered into the equation. In the ethnicity category for Latinos and Other there is a negative correlation in all three steps of the equation. The Anglo ethnicity category shows a negative correlation in steps two and three.

This can be interpreted to mean that Latinos, Anglos and persons who categorize themselves as "other," feel less personal fulfillment with a foreign language the more they identify themselves with their ethnicity. This is an interesting finding, and can possibly be explained for Anglos by the fact that American society implies that if you are of the dominant culture you should also speak the dominant language.

How this carries over to Hispanics is less clear, but it may be that Hispanics - especially those of the first and second generations - in their struggle to become more integrated within the mainstream American society, are looking towards attaining the dominant language. This would make any foreign language, especialiy Spanish, an apparent hindrance. It is the foreign language teacher's job to be sensitive to these issues so that we can reach all students and take them to a high level of personal fulfillment not only in the f.l. they are studying, but also in themselves and their own culture.

My study also showed how important a good instructor is in the field of foreign languages. Within the College Capability set of variables that particular variable was the only predictor to enter the equation. Of the variables not in the equation

there was a negative correlation with the variable signifying the effectiveness of the audio program in the language lab.

An interesting finding, this could be interpreted as the more satisfied a student is with the language lab, the less personal fulfillment he or she achieves in foreign languages. Taken a bit further, this could mean that the more time an individual spends in the lab, the more isolated he or she feels, and the less connection there is with the holistic concept of foreign languages.

In other words, it is important for foreign language teachers to emphasize to their students that, although the lab is an important supplement to any f.l. course, it is no substitution for the wonderful connection and wholeness one feels when interacting with others in the target language. Foreign languages are living, breathing organisms which are inextricably linked with culture, history, and society. The artificial environment of a language lab, no matter how sophisticated, can never be a substitute for simple communication.

Among the set of independent variables labeled "Other Motivational," the two predictors which proved significant in predicting personal fulfillment were travel facilitated by the f.l. and, surprisingly, the difficulty of the target language. What is important about this finding is that students obviously enjoy being challenged. This, of course, is true of all subject areas, not only for foreign languages. We as foreign language instructors cannot afford to become complacent.

Our discipline is not part of the core curriculum of K-12, and receives low priority even at the post-secondary level. Thus, whatever we can do to improve student satisfaction level should be undertaken.

The interesting finding that a student receives personal fulfillment the harder a foreign language seems to be, can be explained by the fact that fulfillment is attained after an individual perceives having worked hard. The fact that we should always have high standards for our students, no matter what level, is obviously beneficial to both the students as well as our foreign language programs.

In addition, the revelation that students receive higher personal fulfillment with travel facilitated by f.l. study is also no surprise. As a moderately strong predictor of a student's personal fulfillment through foreign language instruction, the variable of facilitated travel points out to instructors in the f.l. field the importance of providing students with a well-balanced program which includes grammar, reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills.

To over-emphasize one at the expense of the others would be doing the student an injustice. The fact that travel with the foreign language makes our students feel better about themselves, also underscores the fact that we must prepare students for the world outside the classroom.

A healthy dose of grammar, reading, and writing should accompany an emphasis on listening and speaking skills, so that all of our students may have good travel experiences abroad.

Although not entering the equation, there were two variables in the other motivational set which had negative correlations in their Betas and T's. Job Advancement as a Result of Language Study and More Money on the Job as a Result of Learning a Foreign Language were both negatively correlated with the dependent variable, meaning that the more job advancement or money an individual receives as a result of f.l. study, the lower their personal fulfillment.

A possible explanation for this is that persons in the positions described by the variables may be under contract by their respective companies to learn a foreign language, the result of which are higher pay and a better position. However, since they are not learning the target language of their own initiative, the personal fulfillment level goes down instead of up.

The last equation, run with a combination of all independent variables, resulted in three variables entering the equation. The first of which was The Teaching Capability of the Foreign language Instructor. Again, we are reminded of the grave importance of teaching excellence to keep our programs alive. Unlike the established programs such as math, science, and English, foreign language programs must hold their own, and a prime way to do this is through excellent teaching!

Entering next was the variable Job Advancement as a Result of Language Study. This variable correlated negatively, as it did in the previous equation. Yet again, we can surmise that the negative correlation is due to persons perhaps being

"coerced" by their job situations to take a foreign language. Instructors can take this at face value and make their classes even more enjoyable, so that even persons not in the class of their own free will may achieve the optimum results, such as higher personal fulfillment.

The last variable to enter was that of Increased Prestige as a Result of Language Study. The correlation between the dependent and independent variables here is quite obvious. The more prestige an individual receives as a result of foreign language study, the higher their personal fulfillment level subsequently becomes.

Teachers can stress the personal benefits of learning a foreign language in their classes, things like: being able to speak with persons of other nations, understanding and taking part in foreign cultures, and even helping the world make one more small step towards world peace! Whether a student chooses to do these things on a personal level or on a broader, public one (such as an ambassador or diplomat), the results in personal fulfillment are positive.

## Conclusions

I have learned a lot from this study; the entire process from drafting the surveys to distributing them in the various classes to coding the results to running statistical analyses, has been very enlightening. I never realized what a wonderful learning experience a study can be. One never begins a research project with concrete answers, and so one's perspective on the subject grows along with the findings.

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Although my hypothesis at the beginning of the paper stated that there was a connection between personal fulfillment and language learning, I didn't know precisely which independent variables had the most impact upon personal fulfillment. My findings suggest that five variables are significantly related to the personal fulfillment that comes with language learning. These predictors, namely, The Teaching Capability of the Foreign Language Instructor, The Relative Difficulty of a Foreign Language, Travel Facilitated by Language Study, Job Advancement as a Result of Language Study, and Increased Prestige as a Result of Language Study, should be looked at in greater detail in further studies.

There is a need for foreign language instructors (especially at the K-12 level, where our discipline is not part of the core curriculum) to recruit more students to our programs. Knowing what variables have a positive correlation with a student's personal fulfillment in the subject will allow foreign language programs to attract more students for a longer period of time (for example for four years at the college level rather than just for the required two semesters).

There is a lot we can also learn from the literature. The book Languages and Children- Making the Match, by Helena Curtain and Carol Ann Pesola, investigates the logic of beginning language training in the early elementary years, when children soak everything up which is taught them. This is also an age when children universally look up to their teachers. Teaching Capability of the Foreign Language Teacher was a major predictor

of personal fulfillment through language learning. Thus, one can assume that if a child is exposed to a good f.l. program at an early age, the more likely they are to have a high personal fulfillment level.

The book Interactive Language Teaching by Wilga M. Rivers extrapolated upon the idea of "humanistic exercises" in the target language at the elementary and secondary levels. By such means the children are encouraged to explore feelings, values, and fantasies, all completely in the target language. Not only do the exercises build listening and comprehension skills, but also tolerance for other cultures. If children are prepared early to deal with the myriad of languages and cultures which abound in the world, they are more likely to experience travel facilitated by language study, which was another one of the independent variables with a positive correlation with personal fulfillment.

Finally, Renate A. Schulz' article entitled Searching for Life After Death: In the Aftermath of the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, reported in 1981 that most area specialist officers in the Executive Branch, including the intelligent services, did not and could not read the materials of greatest concern to them in the original.

Their ignorance in the f.l. would presuppose the need for these individuals to take crash language courses for their jobs, which might in turn lower their personal fulfillment, since they would not be taking the language of their own initiative. The negative correlation between the independent variable Job

Advancement as a Result of Language Study and personal fulfillment is thus explained.

In conclusion, I would hope that my enthusiasm and love for foreign languages came through in this paper. I love what I teach, and my wish is that others will learn to love foreign languages, too. The need for language study cannot be understated. At the time of this writing, war is being ravaged in the Middle East, in Bosnia, and in Liberia. What do all these conflicts have in common?: Cultural and linguistical misunderstanding. If we could only teach all the children in the world beginning in Kindergarten that different languages and cultures enrich not only a person's mind and soul, but the world as we know it, there would be less war and conflict. I guarantee it. That would provide enough personal fulfillment for everyone in the world.

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# Appendix

A-1

Iris Dolores Thot
November 1, 1995

**Why do Community College Students take Foreign Languages?**

Instructions: Please check one only except when otherwise indicated.

1. Why did you decide to study a foreign language? (Check all that apply)

( ) I needed it for my major

( ) For pleasure/travel

( ) To make me more attractive on the job market

( ) For job advancement

( ) To make a difference in the world

( ) Other (Please Specify) _____

| | Yes | No | Not Sure |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2. Do you enjoy the language(s) you are now studying? | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |
| 3. Would you recommend your present foreign language class(es) to a friend? | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |

4. In which foreign language class(es) are you currently enrolled? _____

(For numbers 5 - 8, the following codes are used: Ex = Excellent, VG = Very Good, Gd = Good, Fr = Fair, Pr = Poor)

Please note: If you are taking more than one foreign language class this semester, please skip to question 8.

| | Ex | VG | Gd | Fr | Pr |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. How would you rate the quality of the foreign language program at your college? | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |
| 6. How would you rate your present foreign language teacher? | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |
| 7. How would you rate the text which you are using in your foreign language class? | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |

8. How would you rate the effectiveness of the audio program in the language lab?

| Ex | VG | Gd | Fr | Pr |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |

9. What kinds of changes do you feel would benefit the existing foreign language program at your college?

_____

_____

10. Is learning a foreign language difficult for you?

( ) Yes, extremely so

( ) Yes, but I enjoy it.

( ) It's not hard, but I still have to study a lot.

( ) No; it's a breeze!

( ) Not sure

11. Metaphorically, what is learning a foreign language to you?

Example: Learning a foreign language is like: learning math.

Learning a foreign language is like:

_____

12. What kinds of outcomes do you associate with learning a foreign language?
(Check all which apply)

( ) More money, since it can help me with my job

( ) Prestige, since I will be able to compete on an international level

( ) Personal fulfillment, since I will be able to speak and communicate better with people from other countries

( ) Other (Please Specify) _____

(For numbers 13 - 16, the following codes are used:
SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Disagree, NO = No Opinion)

13. I would study/work abroad in conjunction with the

| | SA | A | D | SD | NO |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| language(s) I am studying if the opportunity presented itself. | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |
| 14. I feel that if everyone in the world knew how to speak at least one other language there would be less war and conflict. | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |
| 15. I feel that every American school child should study a foreign language beginning in elementary school like they do in Europe and Asia. | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |

16. If you could suggest one thing about foreign language education to the President of the United States, what would it be?

_____

_____

17. What is your gender?

( ) Male ( ) Female

18. What is your age?

( ) 20 or younger ( ) 21 - 29 ( ) 30 - 45 ( ) 46 - 65

( ) Over 65

19. What is your ethnicity? (Check all that apply)

( ) African American/Black ( ) Anglo/White

( ) Asian American/Pacific Islander ( ) Hispanic/Latino

( ) Native American/American Indian ( ) Other _____

20. With which ethnicity do you most identify? (Please check only one)

( ) African American/Black ( ) Anglo/White

( ) Asian American/Pacific Islander ( ) Hispanic/Latino

( ) Native American/American Indian ( ) Other _____

21. What is your current marital status?

( ) Divorced ( ) Married ( ) Single, Never been married

( ) Separated ( ) Widowed

22. What is your occupation?

_____

23. What is your class year?

( ) Freshman ( ) Sophomore ( ) Junior ( ) Senior ( ) Graduate

( ) Other (Please specify) _____

24. What is your major?

_____

**Thank you very much!**
**Muchas Gracias!**
**Vielen Dank!**